

Message Text

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ACTION CU-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 IO-13 SP-02 HA-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 AID-05 IGA-02
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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5800

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: RW SCUL

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATION ISSUES: RWANDA NEEDS A "FREE PRESS"

REF: STATE 37851

1. REFTEL INVITED POST OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ON COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS. RWANDA HAS NOT YET ARRIVED AT MEDIA SOVPHISTICATION LEVEL TO PERMIT MUCH THOUGHT ABOUT GLOBAL PROBLEMS DISCUSSED AT NAIROBI AND (WE ASSUME) AT FLETCHER. ITS PROBLEMS ARE OF A SIMPLER ORDER: IT HAS ONLY TWO PRINTING PRESSES, ONE GOVERNMENTAL AND ONE CATHOLIC MISSIIONARY, AND ONE OR BOTH ARE USUALLY BROKEN DOWN. AS A RESULT, "WEEKLY" FRENCH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER SUBSIDIZED BY GOR APPEARED ONLY TWICE DURING NOVEMBER-JANUARY, WHILE CHURCH-PUBLISHED KINYARWANDA BIMONTHLY SET ALMOST AS BAD A RECORD.

2. TO MAKE MATTERS WOSE, RWANDA HAS ONLY ONE (GOVERNMENT-OPERATED) FULL-TIME RADIO STATION.

3. REALIZE THIS MAY SOUND PEDESTRIAN IN CONTEXT GLOBAL ISSUES TREATED REFTEL, BUT WE MIGHT WELL GIVE CONCRETE PROOF OF DIRECTOR REINHARDT'S "NAIROBI COMMITMENT" TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BY GIVING -- YES, GIVING -- RWANDA A SERVICEABLE PRINTING PRESS. UNFORTUNATELY, SUCH AN ACT WOULD NOT CONFORM PRECISELY TO AID PROGRAM GUIDELINES NOR TO CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, HELP BRING US NEWS AND VIEWS TO OVER FOUR MILLION NEWS-HUNGRY RWANDANS.

4. ALSO REALIZE THAT DONATING PRESS TO RWANDAN GOVE WOULD NOT NECESSARILY ENHANCE "PRESS FREEDOM" IN RWANDA. BUT FACTS OF LIFE ARE THAT NO PRIVATE RWANDAN ENTREPRENEUR LIKELY TO UNDERTAKE SUCH AN ENDEAVOR IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE, WHEREAS GOR-SUPPORTED "WEEKLY" HAS DEMONSTRATED SURPRISING RECEPTIVITY TO ARTICLES AND LETTERS-TO-EDITOR (INCLUDING SOME OF OURS) DISSENTING FROM OFFICIAL EDITORIAL LINE. MOREOVER, TO HAVE PRESS FREEDOM YOU MUST BEGIN WITH A PRESS.

5. IF THERE IS ANY WYA IN WHICH DONATION OF A PRINTING PRESS COULD BE FIT INTO NEW PROGRAMS NOW BEING DESIGNED IN WASHINGTON (REFTEL), WE URGE ITS CONSIDERATION.
CRIGLER

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